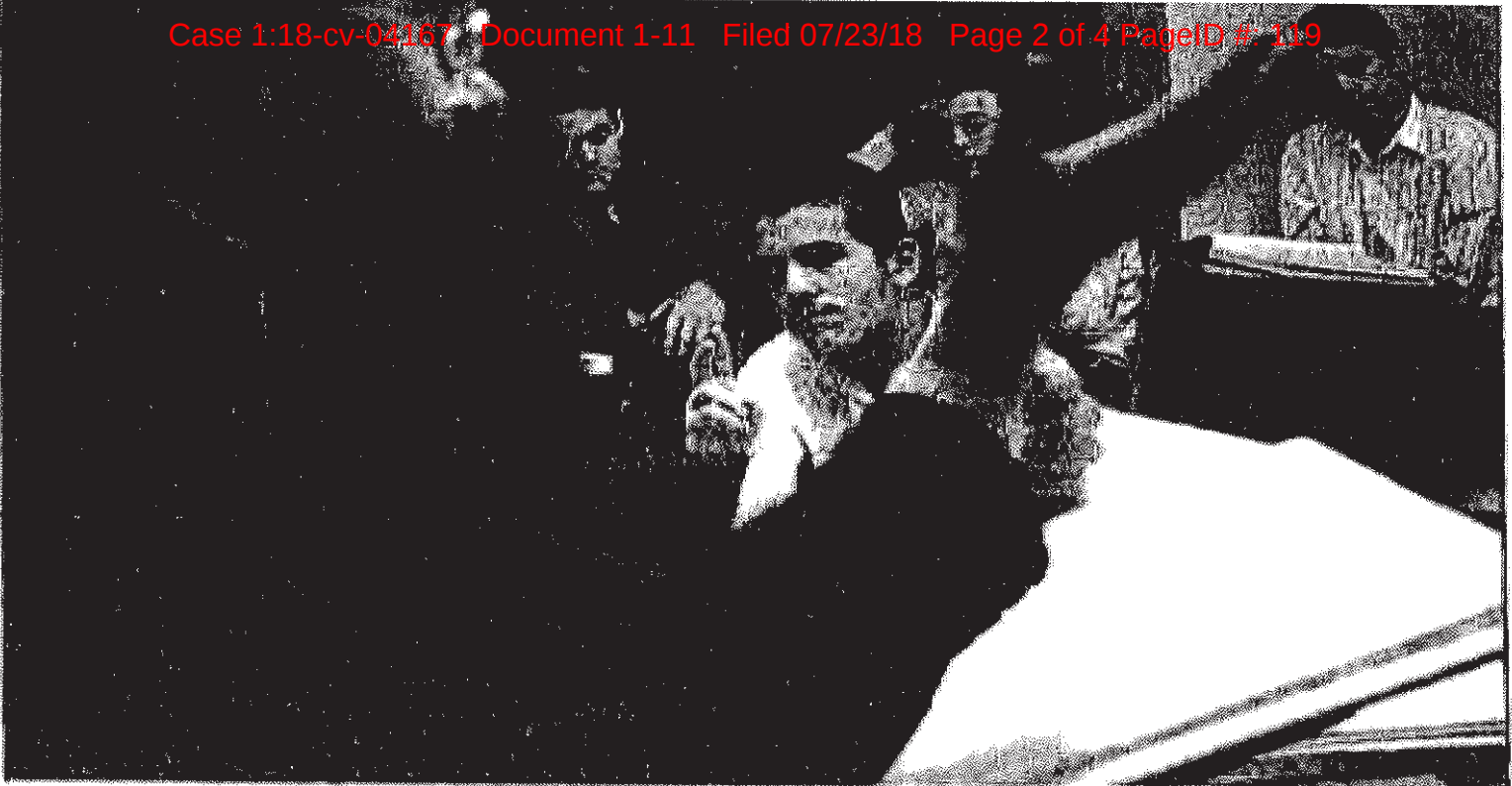


# EXHIBIT 7



Photograph by Jim Harkin/The New York Times

For Orthodox Jews, the study of the laws that govern their religion is a lifetime pursuit that is meant to give meaning to their daily lives as well as linking them to God.

Rabbi Nachman Y. Twersky taught yeshiva students at Oholei Torah. Four of its students were attacked in a van on the Brooklyn Bridge last week.

## So Far From the Brooklyn Bridge

### Yeshiva Spurns the Secular World

By JOSEPH BERGER

The word yeshiva means "a place of sitting," yet few people who learn Oholei Torah, the yeshiva attended by the four Hasidic students who were shot on the Brooklyn Bridge last week, would find it a peaceful spot.

There is, to be sure, a lot of sitting on worn benches in front of battered volumes of Talmud. But the air in the yeshiva's run-down study hall is clamorous with students explicating ambiguities and enigmas and arguing over super-fine distinctions. Inevitably, more than a few break into melancholic swooning as if the passion of their movement could clarify a passage's complexity.

This is the fashion in which Orthodox Jews have studied for 2,000 years as they have tried to master the laws that govern their religion and their daily human dealings while seeking a deeper understanding of and connection to God.

The word may seem exotic to most Americans, but in the Orthodox community it is the central institution of their faith, preparing Jews for what will be a lifelong commitment to Torah learning, study for its own sake.

The Talmud has even prepared the Lubavitch Hasidim for decisions about a wounded student, Aaron Halberstam, who died last night. His doctors had declared him clinically dead because his brain had ceased. But the Talmudic sage, says the yeshiva's principal, Rabbi Wilhelm, lives on a beating heart.



# A School Is Devoted To Religion

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faith in a way not only for themselves, but understand it in order to give it over to others," said Rabbi Zushe Wilhelm, the principal of Oholei Torah.

There are 560 elementary and secondary Orthodox yeshivas in the United States and Canada with 140,000 students, according to Torah Umesorah, the national society for Hebrew day schools. They share many features: study in Hebrew or Yiddish, separate classes and often buildings for boys and girls, school days that run as long as 14 hours and a heavy concentration on Talmud, the 63-volume collection of rabbinical debates and interpretations of Jewish laws.

Within this universe, Oholei Torah, housed in a rundown three-story brick building on Troy Avenue in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, maintains a singular identity. It offers heavy infusions of Hasidic philosophy, including the teachings of the venerated Lubavitch leader, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, and it spurns all secular studies for its 340 young men, ages 13 to 20.

## Geometry of a Temple

While girls do learn traditional high school subjects, though not so much Talmud, at their separate Beth Rivka Yeshiva, boys are expected to learn any science, mathematics or history on their own. Rabbi Wilhelm says teachers will, for example, provide lessons about mathematics when they teach the geometry of the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. Almost all that the boys will need to lead a righteous and harmonious life, he asserts, is in the Talmud.

High school boys start their 14-hour day at 7:30 in the morning with a lecture on Hasidic philosophy, usually a mystical exploration of the identity of God that prepares them for the prayer session that follows.

"You need to understand whom you want to pray to," says Rabbi Wilhelm.

After breakfast, it is back to the study hall to sit with chavrusas, or



Jim Kuttner/The New York Times

Lunchtime for yeshiva students at the Oholei Torah is similar to school meals everywhere, a break for food and then impromptu recreation. Students ad-libbed a game of hockey with a crushed soda can.

mud.

If a person gives wool to be dyed and it comes back the wrong tint, how much should the worker pay the aggrieved customer? Well, the two boys discovered, the answer, as with all Talmudic riddles, is not simple. A ruling depends on whether the worker was a professional or just a helper, whether the badly dyed wool can be sold and whether the profit on that sale exceeds the cost of the wool.

It is on such nuances that many decisions in law and life ride. Ask Shlomie why at 16 he should be learning such fine points of law instead of science or history, and he responds:

"It sharpens the mind. The book of laws tells you what you do, but the Gemara takes everything apart.

firstborn of Egypt's Jewish slaves to death, every firstborn is regarded as belonging to God and must be redeemed by a payment of five silver dollars to a temple priest within 30 days of birth. Today it is largely a fanciful rite, but the Talmudic study in Rabbi Twersky's class was quite serious.

What if the child is stillborn or dies before 30 days, does the obligation persist? What happens if the boy is born with two heads? Does the father pay twice or nothing since the baby is likely to die?

As he lectured, Rabbi Twersky's right hand spun arabesques in the air that seemed to trace the coiling intricacy of what he was arguing. "What if the child lives?" one boy asked Rabbi Twersky.

"A child with two heads can't live more than 12 months," the rabbi re-

assigned study partners, at tightly clustered benches and pore over the Talmud passage that will be the subject of an 11:30 lecture. Peer tutoring and mentoring may be the latest fads in American education, but at Oholei Torah they are just new slogans for a centuries-old concept.

The study hall, which is known as the bes medrash and doubles as a synagogue, is a bright if shabby second-floor room covered with drab wooden paneling. One wall is lined with tall volumes of Talmud and commentaries that surround a small holy ark that contains Torah scrolls, the fundamental books from which the Talmud itself streams. Another wall has one of the ubiquitous portraits of Rabbi Schneerson.

#### Study and Hospital Visits

The other day, Shlomie Cheln, a thin 16-year-old youth with wisps of facial hair, and his study partner, Zalman Marasow, a stockier youth with the beginnings of a black beard, were hunched over a page of Baba Kama, a treatise on the Gemara, the volumes that form most of the Tal-

## At a yeshiva, devotion to the study of nuances of religious law.

There are two sides to every story, and every sage will hold a different side. You can sit with a page of Gemara for weeks."

#### Studying an Ancient Rite

One lecture the other day was given in a classroom by Rabbi Nachman Y. Twersky, a burly figure with a curly black beard that draped over his blue three-quarter coat. Quoting such commentators as Rashi, he talked in Yiddish to his rosy-cheeked teen-age scholars about an ancient rite known as pidyon haben: the redemption of the firstborn.

Because Pharaoh condemned the

toried.

#### Relevance to Modern Conflicts

The principal, Rabbi Wilhelm, says that the Talmud's cases, though they may be considered outdated, nevertheless form precedents for adjudicating modern conflicts. The Talmud may speak about the damages that must be paid when a farmer's ox chews up a neighbor's field, but the case may be applicable to an accident in which a car's tire strikes a piece of wood that hits a passer-by in the eye.

Even the laws governing the operations of the destroyed Temple in Jerusalem are studied closely. The Rebbe, or Grand Rabbi, has told followers that they must prepare for the rebuilding of the Temple should the Messiah come. The Rebbe's preachings have been deeply ingrained, and students regularly importune visitors to don phylacteries to deepen their Jewish identification.

After the lecture, students return to the study hall to review the lesson. They go to lunch, come back for afternoon prayer — including Psalms for the recovery of the Grand Rabbi, who has been debilitated by a stroke — then spend the next two hours delving into Talmud on their own. After supper, which the neighborhood youths eat at home, there is a return to the bes medrash for a final review of Talmud and a study of the week's Torah portion that lasts until 9:30 P.M.

Although they do not watch television or go to movies, the students seem to take pleasure in this dense daily routine. Their eyes twinkle at a particular insight or finessing of logic. And they find their own exercise. During the lunch period, a half dozen boys improvised a rough game of hockey in a third-floor classroom, using their legs as sticks and a flattened soda can as the puck.

At Oholei Torah, which means Tents of Torah, many of the youths in the high school and in the advanced yeshiva on the first floor plan to seek rabbinical ordination even if they will not work as conventional rabbis. Most say that after arranged marriages they want to spend several years as emissaries of the Lubavitch Rebbe, settling in far-off Jewish communities and working to expand the commitment of assimilated Jews.

Whatever careers they choose, all the students say they will devote much of their day to the study of Talmud.

"There's a saying," said Shlomie Cheln. "Teach a child when he's young, and then when he gets older he'll do it by himself."

## Shot in Van, Youth, 16, Dies

Aaron Halberstam, 16, a victim of the shooting on the Brooklyn Bridge, died last night after being kept on life-support systems for two days, said a spokeswoman for St. Vincent's Hospital.

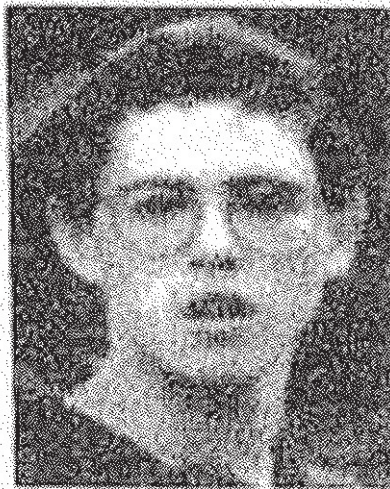
Mr. Halberstam was pronounced dead at 9:46 P.M., said Dana Gabriel, the spokeswoman.

He was one of two young men who were critically injured on Tuesday when a gunman fired on a van carrying more than a dozen Hasidic students as it began to cross the Brooklyn Bridge.

Mr. Halberstam was declared brain dead by his doctors shortly after the shooting.

Ms. Gabriel said he had not been taken off the support system at the time of his death. "My understanding is that it was the natural course of the severity of his injuries," she said.

Yehuda Krinsky, a spokesman for the Lubavitchers, said: "We all feel the deepest grief, pain and anguish." He called Mr. Halberstam "a young martyr who died because he was a Jew."



Aaron Halberstam, shown in a recent school photograph.

Funeral services are scheduled for 1 P.M. today at Lubavitcher World Headquarters, 770 Eastern Parkway, Crown Heights.